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Nexus

Student Activities

Winter 1-1-2005

Nexus, Winter 2005

Wright State University Community

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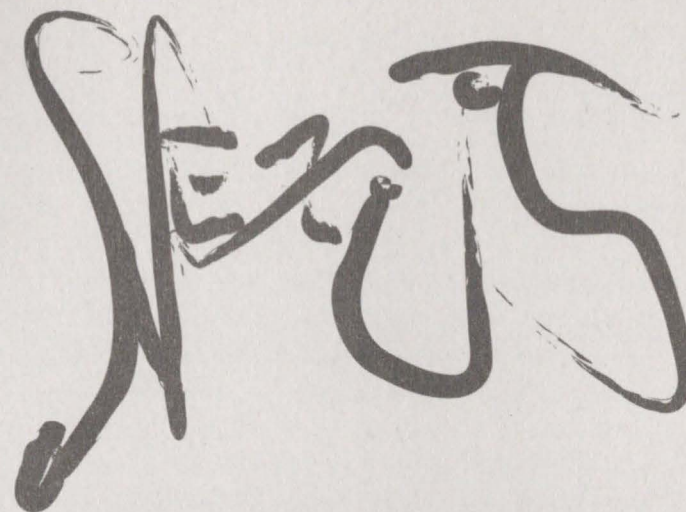
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**Volume 40
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Winter 2005**

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Letter to the Reader

Welcome to *Nexus*! Leave your shoes at the door...

With all the varied submissions we received, it was difficult to pin down one or two themes common to the best submissions, so we left a theme up to you -- the reader. Any connections made between these poems is strictly coincidental, though highly encouraged. Remember: this issue reflects the tastes of the editors (or lack thereof). We are all drawn to different styles, and so this collection is as motley as we are.

The staff here at *NEXUS* would like to thank the following individuals for their sweat & tears:

Brady Allen, faculty advisor
Jason Frisbie
Beverly Smart
Dawn Tarjeft

the *NEXUS* staff

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Jim Tarjeft
Rachel Peterson
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Phil Estes

the next issue will have several sections

1. We are looking for poems that come in sequence: several poems about the same story that work together, and poems whose meanings are changed by their partners.
2. We are looking to include a section where the poets can discuss their own work. Those who wish to apply, attach anything you would like to tie in with the poem along with an email address so we can contact you and discuss the presentation.
3. MORE FICTION! MORE ARTWORK! We are more than a poetry magazine and it would be nice if our submissions reflected that!
4. We are looking for people who won't listen to us. Don't be afraid to

SUBMIT.

NEXUS-hosted poetry readings

2nd, 6th, & 10th week of class
Thursdays
free entry

Everyone is invited to share, learn, interact and grow through artistic expression and a common understanding of the struggles we all go through every day. Through a refusal to give up and a life sustaining need to make life apparent to the passerby, this activity will become a standard among the WSU student base and continue past the current *NEXUS* staff.

Bring your POETRY, your PROSE, your HOMEMADE EXPRESSIONS of the life you trudge through and battle with every time you wake up and are drawn to a pen. Bring your TEARS and your LAUGHTER and KICK DOWN THE BARRIERS that separate you from the people around. Bring YOURSELF.

This project's success is not based in the artwork presented or the advertisement it makes available for every WSU brochure, but in the connections it forges between individuals.

Come to our poetry reading -- a gathering of minds hell-bent on finding a meaning in this haphazard mess we have learned to accept as life. At the very least, come so that afterwards we can all get together and acknowledge that at the very peak of our efforts we will only scratch the surface of the very complicated, the very unknown, the very essence that as human beings we are forced to breathe in every day.

NEXUS

POETRY CIRCLE

EVERY THURSDAY AT 7PM IN THE
NEXUS OFFICE, WHILE THE SPACE IS
SUFFICIENT.

JOIN THE *NEXUS* STAFF TO
SHARE POETRY, FELLOWSHIP &
CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM.

NEXUS_MAGAZINE@HOTMAIL.COM

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coverart provided by:
Beverly Smart

WORDS

Deadline

I see the contest deadline
was the first
and it is now the fifth
so I was wondering if by the first
you meant the first
or instead
the *whole* of February?

I note also that you will not take
submissions by express mail or by e-mail
and I assume that by express mail you include
the Pony Express among others
which I well understand, because the horses
can make a mess under the porte-cochère
but in this case I will have sent the story
from this house by sedan chair
to my neighbor's
and they will ride it into town
on their Tennessee Walker,
not an express horse at all,
and only then will it be scanned and e-mailed
to you
so though you will have received it by e-mail
I will not have sent it by e-mail
and I trust that you can recognize
the difference.

While your rules
regarding theme and length
are quite definite, still
I am sure you will agree
true Art has long ago discarded
the requirements of form, of subject
and of anything inhumanly restrictive
so I have taken these as suggestions,
and while good suggestions in their way
have had to put them aside
in this particular case.

Finally, when you receive my submission --
I await only your kind permission --
you will note that it consists
of key passages only, those scenes
that express the essence of the piece
because we both understand
that time is valuable
and inspiration more so
and one can hardly be expected to write out
an entire story without the assurance
of already having won the contest
so I have completed sufficient material
for you to judge the thing
imagining for yourselves the parts that I have left
as I say
to the imagination.

May I assume that no
technicalities
will bar my entry
from consideration?

Truth

There's always a girl at the front door,
ringing the doorbell at 3am with her
face wrinkled, upset, clenching the dark words
inside her with her white-knuckled fists. And before
I ever open myself to her, I
already know she'll end up sleeping in
my bed. Before I can ever reason
"why?", I know we'll hammer out the compromised

problems with hard sex and the after-shock
that clouds them in oblivion. And she'll
whisper as if after a baptism, "Don't you
think there's still a chance to reclaim
our innocence?" And I'll leave my heart concealed
and hold her, as if trying to hold the truth.

Barry Ballard

12

Road of Open Hands

When we try to win the world's affection,
we're sometimes left with the shackle of self-doubt,
or mistrust for a distorted world that numbs
itself from seeing the things we love. Out
of the cold hammer of bondage we ask
for the key that can open us up,
something as tangible as varnished brass,
where its weight presses into the dust

of our open hand. And love walks out
from its stone wall, its iron gate, as mortal
as any living thing severed at its roots.
It looks into the burning sky and shouts
its new name, celebrates the morale
of self-acceptance, the new road underfoot.

Barry Ballard

13

Landforms

The brown Indian blanket shaped
Our bodies into painted mountains.
Blinds created shadow and light waves
That washed slowly against your cliffs.
My shape shifted and created a valley between us
But the cool breeze from outside made me
Inch closer to your summit.
Then I put my ear to your chest
I listen for the racing of wild horses.

Under the warm covers
We created and destroyed.
Valleys turned to mountains.
High peaks turned to hills.
In the end like ancient landforms.
We rested for a million years
Only weathered by wind and rain.

Dream State

We drive from here to California
Half awake
Half asleep
Things start to take on
A form not their own

Drained now by highway
Every light
Red
Yellow
Burn like stars
In the cold rain

Watching water droplets
Form veins on the windows
Shifting views from
Front seat
Back seat
Time to lie down

Staring up at the
Running trees
Can't sleep for fear of
Dying
Living
In our machine
Crammed little peapod of people
This could be our final destination

Ratrun

Cars dodging tailback
crow the day on Eaton Road.
The fate of the morning
is balanced on a glance.

Rampant men shave
a minute off a mile.
Women cue the dead
on cellphones.

Children's names are patents
in a dream school.
Seconds hatch futures
at criminal lights.

Colourblind chickens scratch
for worms on the road.
Friendly death must call
someone by name.

Life's a Stitch

She's soft as a shilling,
fidgets with her dinner,
combing the plate for hunger.

Blinds down,
lips pulled back to the ears,
breath fights a sigh.

There's a flaw in the pattern.
Laughter trips on it.
'Life's a stitch, don't drop it.'

Still clings to the petal,
always buzzing,
sweet as a bee.

Soot

Black soot
Invades peeling hands
Picking up jagged pieces
Of a burnt cross

Sunrise

Blue
Sun Rise
Fracturing light
Through the wet
Dripping
Dew

Hell Bound

Tracing fluid through veins
You'll see it in the toes
Horses thrashing violently at the surf
both foam at the mouth

You've spent too much time in rooms
listening and not listening to other people
A leaf hangs desperately to a limb
parents make you want to leave

Dye permanently injected into flesh
"God didn't give you that
You should go to hell for your blasphemy."
cigarette smoke traces imaginary lines

All things unnatural, it's the blankness
of your mind, your face, your life
flickering on a computer screen
If only you could hear your eyes scream

Pages ear-marked in a copy of The Bible
since when did Catholic school uniforms
turn men on? Repressed, covered in dust
and bruises from years of misuse

This is it, the moment of truth
thinking that not thinking was right
now it all comes to pass
and it's getting a little hot in here...

Dulli's Inferno

I'm riding, passenger side, next to Greg
cigarette barely hanging on to his lips
and that devilish smirk on his face
he wears like a shield, makes him invincible,
the town behind us is in flames.
"Going to Town" screams from the car speakers.
His voice, smooth, carries like a saxophone.
"So get on down
This time we go a little lower."*
I'll be damned if he didn't light that cigarette off of a
burning building as he spread the gasoline.
His ego flares like the heated destruction behind us,
his laughter on the verge of maniacal.
He speaks of knowing the Devil like a preacher who
has experienced true sin.
I'm pretty sure writing a song about a crime
then committing it stands for criminal intent in some courts.

The whole world could be coming to an end right now
but my only thought is of taking him in the backseat,
a chance to kneel at the alter of St. Gregory,
let him tell me how much he knew I would do this
stroke his ego, but I would, and would love it
just to be near him, to have his attention for a fleeting moment,
make him moan and come underneath me.
"I just want to play with you a while, until every last detail
of your existence become song lyrics."

* Bulletproof by Afghan Whigs

Coats

When my mother was young, she was rich
So rich that her father bought her a coat
Straight from a department store
At ten after closing time by knocking on the window
And shaking a hand full of money at the manager.

It was a beautiful coat.
Georgia clay red with a furry collar.

When my mother got a little older, her family was poor
And her mother and her had to share a coat. One had to
wait for the other to come in order to go out.

It was an ugly coat.
Dull, black like something a pallbearer would wear.

When she passed away,
My sister and I quarrel over her belongings
One coat particularly.

It was chic
camel-colored, cinching at the waist.

My father threw salt.
He said that it looked better on me
Through persistence, I won it.

She was a secret, mostly silent woman.
What I know of my mother, I glean from thread.

Crossover Flirting

Imagine your fiance's hand up my thigh.
Him telling me I looked like a Black Julia Roberts
So innocent, so hot
Something about my narrow face
My steel belted radial lips...
All right
I liked it
This being fed.
Enormous is my head
That your boyfriend's grossly blatant come ons
Hit me with fuzzy caterpillar harmlessness
Of course, now, I know this ruins the echelon of things
I now interfere with your zip-locked dreams of marriage
Normalcy
A house in Linden Hills
He said we were the same:
Skinny and grinny
Till then I had no idea that Hollywood's
Highest paid actress
Looked like a white version of me.

Hedge

Remember when we realized we had gotten lost
by that solitary tree in the middle of a field,
an openness of stones and stubble
with sparse rows of trees and bushes on the horizon,
a labyrinth of nothing
but all the same we couldn't trace our road back.
Wilderness can start suddenly, near home,
it can drop all around us at once, at the next step,
even now while speaking, we are telling each other
with our gaze, to keep at bay that foreign alertness
in the pools of our eyes,
by this hedge, red and bronze in the sunset
with its garland of burnished blue haze,
our garden so richly framed,
our feet spread on the grass,
the outside pressing in, overwhelming no doubt,
but we are here and we love it, "ripeness is all",
will we ever want to be ready?

Herring Gulls

Ever present with their echoing cackles,
persistent as the grinding tide of the sirocco days,
feeding on anything, their strength
is their loud closeness, their alertness
along the shore-maze of what the world gives away,
fish, weeds, strips of carcasses, ribbons of rubbish,
what they pursue
are the very sediments of the sea's throat supporting you.
You sail now in the swelling morning wind along the islands
and their mottled silvery wings beckon and skirt the margins
of the cypresses' tops bathed in a hazy sky,
bending like soft arrows,
you breathe the salty crops of the wave-crested horizon
with the hum of the already descending heat, you know
the cackles will accompany you until dusk,
will enter your marrowbone with the billows' bustle
and be in tune with your mind's stage when you shuffle home
and sense the stones of the street sweating off the day,
shedding their silent lines of salt.

Yamamoto in the Suburbs

Few luxuries are afforded to the young.
This said nonchalant ness should be worn on ones'
sleeve.

Taking time out of a lazy day to be busy.
This the students' motto.

Care-free attitudes hang like cigar smoke.

Neither wishing to leave the bar.

The sign of a true scholar is knowing you know little.

And more than most.

Yet short is this life lived.

Barring the five year standard.

When Mr. and Mrs. have good paying jobs.

And scruples about tattoos.

You'll have left behind

Pick up games

Garage bands

And

Ambition

To gain...Clay Aiken?

At Ten Years Old

At breaking day
by Boston's waterfront
you make a wish
in green bottles
four times.
fumbling with my kite
watching others
go to Sunday School
probably praying in black
four times too;
dad takes mathematics seriously
more than religion. he says.

The air seems cleaner
after the morning rain
a sailboated teenager
riddled with tattoos
and yellow-gold neck chains
signals to me on the dock.
with easy footwork
I get in the boat
and out to sea
watching vendors
setting up shop
along the shore
with melons and tea.

Using a thousand intimations
he tells me of his exile
and his dozen conquests
asking his name.
"Call me Ulysses."

Viewing from Afar

The center of my soul shifts on occasion,
sometimes close to heart or body, other
times residing far away from me, as if

it would see me from afar for a better
analytical view of this odd entity with
which it has been saddled. This is okay.

For once the soul removes, I feel free to
look at it with my own sad eyes, as if I could
shame it into treating this poor body better.

But Now

Skin and ice, two extremes, but
you explained how the two come
to embrace each other, then actually
become each other; you whispered,

there, above the sheets, your own
bronze skin akin to glaciers by its
resolve and unyielding presence
which eventually overtakes everything

in its path. You hooked a leg over me,
your breast now on my arm as you
chastised my own flesh. "You white
men never think past the moment of

this act, but will quickly admit we all
end up as ice." My eyebrows raised in
assent and desire for you to go on.
"The question," your black eyes spoke

up at me, "is how the cold of death becomes
newly born bones of flesh. Your mind and
body are warm with life while your soul
and ghost are cold within the space of death."

You moved on top to straddle me, "In, out,
in... open, closed, open... love is a metaphor
for the way your being slides back and forth,
sometimes breathing, sometimes dead."

But now, so far away from Alaska, I see how
you were right about white men; my memories
of you can never get past your copper beauty,
and I never really understood the allure of the cold.

If the Dead Must Speak

We miss our limbs, the splay
of arms, the limbo legs, the
intimate positioning of apertures
for sex; all must touch
to satisfaction, even toes.

We miss the inflections from
our tongues and vocal chords,
and where we can now convey
our words much more succinctly,
there is no way to cluck

or kiss a minor statement
for a proper irony; we miss
the sibilance that comes from
talking faster than one's own thoughts...
for out here we never run faster

than the speed of thought, it's physically
impossible, you know, yet we would
hiss and hiss, as gulls might whisper...
but most of what we miss is you,
for none of us would trade places.

and this, just this, is a fine thing
for you to know...

our waiting for your own death.

Hell on Earth

Hell is the flaming red color of fire trucks
In the Saturday morning cartoons
Where sharp-tailed and horned
Lucifer dances on the hot coals
Pitchfork in one hand

But this is reality, unforgiving
And the red smears on the walls and streets
Where previously, young women waited for the bus
Dry an ugly, familiar brown

The children, that is, the Lucky Children
Who've survived another night of our fiery napalm rain
Faces melted to congeal in thick drops
Hanging from jawbones that are forced forever to smile
In spite of that smell-
That smell of burnt hair that gets inside your nose, your
mind
And lingers

Tortured young men on both sides
Kill vigorously, becoming enthusiastic
As they used to cheer on a soccer match
Desensitized pawns guarding oil convoys
Through the flat, barren sand

The earth is full of the dead
So full that they seem to have spilled out onto the street
They walk around silent and expressionless
With haunted and sleepless eyes cast down
Afraid they'll be discovered here among the living
And be shoved into their graves

Forgetful Jazz

I sit in the smoky grey haze
Of aged brandy and cigarettes
This is where people come to unwind
Forget their problems
I'm here tonight to see if I can forget you

The crooner on stage is singing Moondance
One of my favorites
I motion the waiter over
And ask for a martini

I dressed up tonight
Ironically it ended up being
That little black dress you always liked
I laughed when I put it on
In spite of myself

The waiter brings my martini
And smiles
I tip him well
Seems like a nice guy

I sip my martini
Letting the sultry slow
Sounds of the sax
Wash over me like rain
As it mingles with the string bass

I came here to forget
Forget the dinners by candlelight
Forget the stormy night pillow talks
Forget your smile
Forget your eyes

A gentleman comes over
From the next table
And asks me to dance
I give him my million dollar smile

As he leads me to the dance floor
I realize I will never completely forget
But I gotta move on
Smiling at my partner I silently say
Goodbye baby goodbye

The Anecdotes That are Told

The anecdotes that are told
in taverns are commonly
edged with tacit melancholy,
sentimentality, regret;
such recitals are not heard
in the sunlighted street
where commerce and trafficking
take predominance.

The parables that are told
in churches are commonly
lore tinged with the glint
of the supernatural;
such stories are rarely
shared in the stark daylight
where reality is agreed upon
through mutual consent.

Portrait of an Essayist as an Elderly Fellow

What does an old soldier
do when the armistice
has been duly signed
and hostilities ended?
He feeds the too-fat pigeons
from the vantage of park-bench --
looks asksance at young lovers
tangent at fingertips, lips.

The creaking in joints
has become pseudo-eloquence --
a moralistic prattle
of life drawn thin and long.
The wordiness of essayists
is certainly sold cheaply --
as those poets and journalists
who cannot choose but scribble.

Commune Daze

There had been some talk
of violent revolution.
And some gossip concerning
an enduring peace.
The more gentle ones
returned in spirit
to their childhood
or something very like it.

Predicably, the only
change was in the wrinkles
that spread while awaiting
salvation or catastrophe.
The commune daze generally
passes with summertime,
the poetry that doesn't rhyme,
faith that disintegrates.

Sonnet # 12 – Indecision

I beg return, the moments that I chose
By choosing not, to set my final course.
For passing hesitation often grows
To concrete folly backed by brazen force.
I let myself give way to pacifists
Who gently murmur'd soft and soothing sounds.
Their end result entirely consists
Of compromise to shaky middle ground.
When fin'ly I resolved to take a stand,
The wise stood firm, regarding me with ire.
So settled I with reckless, angry plans
Which, though convictionless, were filled with fire.
While seeking to defer, with all agree,
I grew to be like them, and withered me.

Movie

A movie's the kind of thing where
when you've once again worked up
whatever it takes to give life another
chance you phone her.

and when you tell her who you are
and her *oh* sounds more disappointed
than you knew *ohs* got

you walk out, leaving however the plot's
going to twist to twist away without you --
and in the aisle beside where you sat that
huge plastic cardboard thing of popcorn,
only half its kernels eaten.

Karma

How do you explain making so little that's interesting
out of the way the world's treated you --
out of your suffering?

Given such enduring cause for grief,
you owed it to the world -- and us -- to create something
really special from your pain.

But all you've turned out to be is irresponsible:
made us -- forced by fate to be your relatives or friends --
your bored victims.

And since, unlike us, the world can't occasionally doze off,
it must stay madder than hell --
and dying to get even.

all those whistles I couldn't form my
lips into

some are drawn to block the light.
but me, the light shines straight through,
my skin the thinnest of prisons.
it's why i stay afraid.

i am not crazy, but sometimes,
when the passion slides into my
hollow bones, i am filled and i can
hear myself rat-tat-tattle
in the wind. then i realize there is
no form my scars can take that will be
recognized as such. no place for them
to curl their toes like red faced children.
smile at the dawn.

so i
tether any fear to my little finger and step
towards the light.
towards
this boy who throws
his hair out of his eyes, his hair that grew
so long it shattered. (i
touched it when he wasn't looking; he
never looks)

but this boy has
a dark smile with teeth
that catch the light, and his gleam
is in my mind when i breathe
after the sun has departed.

a bird lodged in my throat now
is struggling. his little wing
feather has caught on my epiglottis
and he is angry.

i gather my voice in a long string
to sweep away any feathers and

i call him *my love*.
speak it like the flash of a camera.
and as he drives down the road,
he closes his eyes (they are green)
tells me to direct his steering.

Gated Communities

The gardener has a special code to open the gate;
housewives call him little Jose,
give him five dollar holiday bonuses.
Every week he looks up at the sparkling househeights,
waits for the ponderous gate to swing inward,
his smile crouching between his ears.

Mothers, dressed and coiffed by six to stay
home with the big screen and two
radios on, perch awkwardly in vast kitchens, dwarfed
by ornamental, twenty-pound jars of colored
pasta, signposts on the highway stretches
of shiny
marble counter space.

The children --
cigarettes and frantic love-making,
graduated only on paper, locked into college
definitions of things, parents' homes
concealing them as they job hunt
every fifth day.

Jose at the zoo, marvels at the tigers,
watches their long teeth as they yawn, sees them
pace, contained. Awed by dangerous
animals and amazed by cages, his youngest nephew
dreams of taming lions.

Teresa Breeden
42

Wednesday (for Lydia)

I can smell him in the shaving room,
a small private bath off my parents' room
where my sister and I smeared
Mother's red lipstick slickly across our
soft pink lips when we were children.
His plaid bathrobe hangs abandoned
and thin on a hook behind the door,
left-over bits of his shaving
still cling to the sink,
his striped boxers scatter in a
wicker hamper...
Rows of bottles are lined like soldiers
on his shelf --
shaving creams, aftershaves, colognes
from holidays past --
some of the scents dabbed on my sister and me
when we were small and underfoot
from previous bottles long since emptied.
The floor is shiny today from a recent mopping,
white and inviting like when I was five.
I begin dancing the way Dad taught me then,
breathing deeply,
breathing him in so fully that I hurt,
expanding myself to take in air enough
for him now too,
his thin plaid bathrobe wrapped around me
like gauze.

Tina Puckett
43

The First Time I Heard the Words

I think I was standing at a telephone pole
smoothing the wood with its thick scent
like tar
when she walked up
smearing Barbie Doll lipstick on her lips,
puckering them up like fish.
I could see that
the rest of her face was still
smooth and fresh and very eight years old
like my own.

"So, what are you doing?" she said to me
without much interest,
and I answered with "nothing"
and wondered why she was so quiet
like sadness this time.
"He's moving today," she said to me,
looking past me at the berry bush
where my mother said I got poison ivy
every time I was peppered with heat rash.
"Moving out?" I questioned and looked at
the big spool-like wooden thing
all us neighbor kids used as a slide
behind Adrian's house
and down over the hill from Lucinda's.
"Yeah," she said
looking at me for a minute
and then her eyes fell to my naked lips.
"Another fight. Want some lipstick?"
"No, I can't. I'm not allowed," I objected.

"So what will happen -- are you staying?"
I asked
and wondered how fun block hide-n-seek
would be without her.
"I don't know" came the response,
and I could see
she was trying not to cry
as her eyes filled up.
"C'mon," I said. "We'll climb the pear tree.
And no one will know we're there."
And then she nodded her head,
and her blond hair bobbed
in the sunlight,
catching rays and
throwing them back again
like unwanted diamonds.

The Ballad of Blackberry Alley

I

John and Asia are fighting again
again and again, since she left for New Zealand
and, I think, she's a little evasive
as he tells her, in whispers, that he's dying without her
that he's running on empty
that the sheets are so cold in the place where she slept
that it's time to come home from this little vacation;

She might be crying; I can sense his frustration;
the echoes of his allegations are trans-oceanic,
but they skitter down the alley to the place where I'm waiting
like the whisper of God says it's time to come home
this trial separation isn't worth the blood it's spilling;
that the pain is beyond expectation

The wind changes and everything's silence.
Then, out of the darkness, God says to me
I'll try to move out
by the time you get back.

II

Baby, let me read you a poem I wrote
I say baby, let me read you a poem.
She leans back against the orange brick
sitting on a galaxy of glass and cigarette filters
she says shoot.

Love, I say, is the title of this piece:
Baby I love the way you love to love me
And baby,
I'd love to love you the way you'd love me to

She gives this a moment's consideration
she stares in contemplation at the slate tiles
hanging like judgment from the eaves above
she says, baby. I'll read you a poem:

My hand twitches from its grip on Fate, she says:
Five is the number of times
I've forgiven you for broken promises
Four is the number of days
it took for me to know I need you
Three are the nights each week
I lay awake asking God why
Two is the times you saved me
from the depths of devastation
One is the hours I would take with you,
in exchange for the balance of eternity

I lean back and she shades her eyes to see me
Yeah, I say, but do you love me?

III

I stand festooned by God and the wind
in the midst of a one man tickertape celebration
the frail pale scent of pear blossoms
surfing the tides of this gasoline asphalt perfume
and in it, I stand anointed

I am a king and the son of kings
I wear laurel on my brow and justice
shines like pearl from my teeth
I am a king and the son of kings
anointed by these oily essences
hovering above my head

I stand festooned by God and
the wind carries fallen blossoms to my coronation
I am the vision and the warmth of life
courses through my veins
the world exists in the beating of my heart

I am a king and the son of kings
anointed by God and the wind
I rule alone over a nation of nothing
at what price have I purchased my kingdom?

IV

Can't you see how tenderly she lays her hand against your cheek,
brushes your three-days' stubble with her softly questioning fingertips
her irises aglow in the citrine sunlight
like tiny supernovas

You travel, hands pocketed, into the shadow of an empty house
and out of the heat of accusation and obligation,
drifting on a random, roaming course
a diversion

Perhaps you've been blinded by the sun and the promises of spring,
wanton and wanting you, you restless satellite.
You shooting star,
pulling yourself far from death and the comfort of gravity

Can't you see how you trace your trail of stardust radiance
through every crease and grotto of her
how you've sated her
that you fill her too full

You impossibly beautiful thing, so like a god in the set of your jaw
how could you have ever been so foolish
to lay in the arms of a lover
so mortal

V

The wind changes and carries the roar and rumble of traffic
through the mouth of the alley, down the throat
to the fence at the end of everything

I hold my head against this gray and splintered wall
I press my body, so like a lover
into the hollow between this and the ground

I am silent as the grave and no breath will pass my lips
I am trapped in the gutter of time
I will wait, breath baited, for something more than myself

There is heartbreak in this place, and loss
there is love and the meaning of angels
there is sweat and the heat of summer

The whole of creation is waiting to breathe
even the dogs have stopped barking
waiting for the girl to come

Philip J. Hickman

50

Placenta

I didn't expect to see it there,

quite like that

it reminded me of a jellyfish

one of those dangerous, methodical creatures
of childhood.

Viewing it there,

resting in thick fluid

placid in its dead state

captured in the contained ocean
of a stainless steel bowl

I was reminded of summers

when seeing something like it,

washed onto the beach

could stop a full speed run
in a moment,

how one tender touch

to an ignorant body part --

would bring tears and pain and swelling

those summers where sunburns

could bring the skin to peel

in long areas, surfaces, to reveal new color

it is strange how it lay there, dead

the perfect mimic of a once feared creature --

docile and listless, discarded

a mere conglomeration of flesh

bound together like wet tissue

when minutes before it had been alive --

a shelter -- a haven for this little creature

who now thrashed beside me

screaming like a slippery fish

the water had released

its tentacles had abandoned.

Nicole Provencher

51

The Secret

the words staggered from your mouth
like glass-eyed, B-movie zombies

and even as our connection sputtered and wheezed
across four hundred Midwestern miles

I sensed the hot, sterile haze of alcohol
bathing your clumsy confession:

"I haven't always been truthful with you."
I'd always expected such words to explode

on impact, or slowly numb me into silence
like drowning under a layer of ice

but I just hung up the phone
and never mentioned it again

the confines of a well worn lie
are warm like accidental urine

or the unspeakably sweet moment
of a coward's surrender

Watching Graffiti from the Windows of the Rapid

Grasp the cold metal bar overhead as the train
Begins to move. Look. Here, amongst the weeds
And faded brick building, is the History of Art.
Wrought with the graceless fury of a seizure.
Sprayed in lightning strokes on the dirty concrete
Canvas. There is the beginning -- the crude cave
Drawing of a human face, cast in obtuse, angry
Strokes of green. The word balloon branching from
His mouth says "FAG." Here are the romantics--
Words cast in elaborate serpentine arcs, twisting
And coiling beyond recognition in layered hues
Of purple and red. A sole expressionist graces
A lonely fuse box with a frowning yellow face.
The brows furrowed inward upon themselves.
The tiny eyes singing the meek complaints of the
Forgotten. And finally, as the track rises and you
Cross the lake, the world is left to the modernists.
Those who walk in silence but have learned truth
Beyond meaning. There, against the tall brown wall
Before the steel mill are their prayers, wrought in
Impossible, apocalyptic strokes of white, at least
Twenty feet high. "OPTIC! DOOM! VS. GODZILLA?"
The words are radioactive, growing more hazardous
As they decay, raging with the piercing wail of prophecy.

Apologia for Natural Ease

Night's ironic murmur of rain,
enough to darken carpet of leaves
and brutal grass, remind hard earth
how far it stays from what it needs.
I don't worry. My new religion.
Sunday morning in soft slippers.
I sprinkle hydrangeas, mottled ferns,
broken pachysandra, mums
the color of a fall wedding, but faded.
I destroy webs with a rotted stick
and watch fat red spiders run.
I let them worry about it, not me,
as per corrections on the telephone --
Cool it, a voice said; you overdo the hose
It's natural to let a garden die. I do.

Apologia for the Family Drive Poem

Sure, we had our Sunday afternoons
like everyone, me and my brothers in back
of Buick or Cadillac, drained Kentucky
landscapes that carried our blood.
It was nice -- hours cruising
shacks where cousins and grandparents
I'd never met had died or killed,
graveyards with our name etched on stone.
If we didn't kick much and pleaded,
dad would floor the big coffin so it boomed
like a rocket over hills and dips
of broken road. Remember how we screamed?
He always wanted his boys behind him.
Of course, finally I was the only one left.
We drove a little more anyway,
rewarded with Krispy Kreme or White Castle
Somewhere along that line, a weekend
or evening whether anyone sensed it,
occurred our last family ride, partial
or otherwise. Maybe we took a hill that day,
maybe laughed as we pulled in.
I hope so. But I'm betting sadness,
recognition of absence, a whiff of the future.
Who knows or cares? It was just a drive.

A Party

i'd been trying to discard my
belief in God but i just couldn't
do it. everything was just too noisy,
too crazy, too obscene, too perfect

burt lancaster was busting out
of prison in black and white,
someone said to change the
channel but nobody did, he
deserved a chance, after all
the shit they'd thrown at him

lou spoke of lorraine and her wild
ways, my heart stopped beating
and started back up again at 1:01
and again at 2:43, and people *still*
say nothing interesting ever goes
on in this town, how wild is that?

For Henry Ford

you look up at the ceiling and
your laughter that sounds like
the braying of a mule reminds
me of a german girl i knew 6
years ago -- in fact, you seem
identical to her in every way

i used to work in a canning
factory, we mass-produced
tin cans full of sliced pears
packed in syrup, i can't say
how many identical tin cans
i saw rush by on tiny tracks
that summer, i could never
tell if i found that parade of
efficiency to be reassuring or
frightening

i think that the assembly line
virus gave us something and
took something else away

when you go, please don't
slam the door, and if you
see the next one, tell her to
be kind to me, like you were

Changing Roles

The cornfield shook
hands with the sky
when we were young.
I got lost in its maze
but she found me
with a smile
between the ears.
She was the strong
one, always holding
my hand through
life's scary moments.
But yesterday I saw
her cowered in the corner
cocooned in a man's coat.
The wind blew briskly
as her blond locks danced.
The deceiving sun cast
her shadow amongst the weeds
growing up through cracks.
Silence, then a spew of
harsh words raged
from her trembling lips.
The tears flowed freely
as she exclaimed "fine!"
Though I doubt she meant it.
She saw me trying not
to stare, "He has bad
habits -- I'm waiting for
him to grow up."
I mustered a faux smile
meant to console.
But you don't grow out of

habits they have
to be broken.
She turned to go inside.
Worn and tired she soon
would break from the
impending storm.

Wednesday in the Park

I.

Fried chicken and pickles.
potato chips, all homemade
as we sit on the hard
metal benches, the grating
sounds of music bear
down on me as he comments
on how much fun
we all are having.

As I look at her again,
I can't help but wonder
what indiscretions
she might find as excuse
to hit me later.

II.

On the way home
we stop for Big Macs.
The mayonaissy sauce
drips on my jeans
as I take a huge bite.

As Brett pulls out
into the intersection,
barely missing
that other car,
I flinch

and begin to cry
thinking of that other life
in Ohio
where I never
have to feel scared.

III.

Back at the apartment
I hide in the bathroom
can't bring myself
to come back out.

Even when my mother
knocks on the door
and tells me to return
my legs won't behave.

The memory of her hand
as it hit my face
the unspoken threat
and the sickly-sweet sound
of her voice through
the wax paper door

this is the hardest part.

Modern Cinderella

In the aisles of Toys R Us
I walk beside her wheelchair
and cane, glancing absentmindedly
at action figures of spiderman
x-men, heroes I wish would
come alive and take me
like prince charming away
from a stepmother who's
really my mother and who
doesn't understand what's
wrong with me as I refuse
to steal the candy she
tries to force
under my shirt.

Jeannine E. Sandlin
62

Earth Hunger

Desire for soil
Is like hounds hustling for food;
Some rudely acquire it for nothing,
Others pay handsomely.
Even those whose lights dim, scramble,
Ignoring that everything is transient.
One would take a ride
Through the sewer system
If that's what it takes.
Man wishes to resemble umbrella webbing
Over this gem with the mind mobile for more
As Kodak moments of life
Revolve around this fixed carpet.
Through land clashes, victims end up
Lacerated, sutured, maimed, silenced, displaced
Yet desperation for it, make many
Do a hundred metres dash or marathon
As unities of purpose are born.
In culture of greed,
Accumulation for speculation thrives and
Possession of huge tracts for status symbol:
Squatters' igloos dot the ground
Looking like isolated shrubs when
Searching for life lines
But landlords torch, scuttle -- these with visas
To hell to tragic and that's
Self being verses peasant's subsistence.
Like cats fighting over meat --
Families' break over land;
Like lions bulldoze for territories --
Communities jostle, feud for grazing, water spheres
While nations quarrel, war
Over strips at frontiers;
Yet, none is infinitive and
One comes and goes with nothing.

Emma Bwika
63

Caterpillar Impatience

These pinnacles of weight
must wait very slowly.
Gracefully, impatiently searching for
temporary, potentially positive placement.
I wonder whether they know
of their future metamorphosis
or if they're just naturally
propelled to cocoon themselves,
without anticipatory foresight?
I hope each caterpillar crawls
forward aware of self-evolution.
"I must climb to hibernate safely,
in order to free most of gravity."

Tangently Mumbling

Pre-portioned distortion persists
through atomic-like imprints
of leaves soaked into cement.
Concrete stains insist decay
be remembered a little longer,
though distorted in brown impression.
Envious, dispersed rust remains,
yet outshined by brief tarnish.

All colors fall to murky similarity,
each embracing their green counter-
part, which will wither away,
only emerging out of necessity.
Circles include without sharp angles:
I mumble in precise tangents.
My touch just slightly felt,
points directly, but doesn't intersect.

Ensenada

Outside the silver
vendor shops
and strip mall
"tourist-friendly"
sections marked
on our Carnival
Cruise ship map
with bright orange
Xs, we found
a cantina to combat
the sweat, the explosion
of Mexican July heat.
My wife bent to give
a handful of coins
we weren't sure
the value of
to a girl, perhaps
seven years old,
who had dark oozing
sores across her arm
and was sobbing
over a bucket of flowers
she couldn't sell.

We were on our honeymoon
and thinking of children,
my wife's sick cousin,
how we worried about
defects, a genetic stew
of trouble, just plain bad luck.
I reached for my wallet
but some American geezer
speaking to a guy behind
a Your Name On a Grain
Of Rice \$1 booth grabbed
my hand. Before I could
scream for *la policía*,

he barked at the little girl
"Fuck off, trash monger,"
and she uncorked
a string of Spanish
which we didn't understand,
but still it burned
at our ears like acid.

Then that girl gave me
a cunning look, curtsied
and sauntered slow
into the grungy dark
of an alley I wouldn't
have entered with a troop
of Green Berets beside me.
"They do that to themselves
so they can make a living,"
the old man said, then
he picked a cigarette butt
from the gutter and asked
me for a lighter. We hurried
back to the orange areas
on our map, the graffiti
covering the low cement walls
changing from obscene black
stick figures to full-color
murals of winged angels whose
mouths are stuffed with pearls.

Faith in Season

*When I was four, I could draw as well as Raphael.
It has taken me my whole life to learn to draw like a
four-year-old child.*

-Pablo Picasso

for R.T. Smith

One summer evening, late,
beside the devouring swarms
of gnats near the oceanfront

where sailors flip rowboats
to scrub dark barnacles from
these hulls, I thought again of the gift

of faith, how we don't ask angels
for credentials or challenge the idea
that a life of consummate wasting

can be wiped clean with the awkward
syllables of forgiveness;
I thought of you, R.T., how your ghosts

don't weep beside mirrors, how
downpours never sharpen into razor
sleet, how a wedge of gray light onto

the TV during *The Wizard of Oz* is welcome,
and even when the black shore of night
seems enormous, burrowing, you instead

think of Paris, where it is beginning
to be morning. Line by line, I read you
for awhile, then sleeps without amnesia.

having remembered once more the calm
devotion of the calendar, one winter to another
without wild applause, but worthwhile,

guiding me then, now, still, to home.

Harvest Season or Another Tale of the Sick Moon

Every scarecrow in the town was female,
so thick in the thigh and leg that even
the plum-colored skirts which billowed

like purple whales in the curl and ebb
of late September wind couldn't disguise
how big, how trunkish these spinsters were.

The farmers swore that as long as these ladies
stayed upright, there was magic in the earth,
and yes, corn, potatoes, and cotton bloomed

out of season, which kept them and their invisible
wives happy, laughing, goading the fog which
on some nights swaggered in, eyes flickering.

So when Old Man McGee stumbled to the outhouse
behind the unfenced tomato garden one night after
a round of whiskey and cribbage with the boys,

he nearly zippered his penis in half, he was in such
a hurry to get inside and howl about how the ladies,
those female sackcloth bundles who push

straw-strands of hair from their eyes as the seasons
flow past, had vanished. The men all poured out
and stood in the blare of dark, looking up where

the quarter moon hung low, like a cleaver ready
to cut old grudges, poised to sever the roots
of their lives into oblivion, blackness, the quiet of rot.

Ryan G. Van Cleave
70

from day one

from darwin's petrie dish man
out his swim.
from the womb after losing
his prehensile grip.
groin'd into being:
genius of the wheel,
consumed with thingness,
randy with yeast moving from
one dark orifice to the next --
unable to remember the last time
he was on top of someone
he loved -- resign'd to play
pretend with second-hand-suffice --

and warring with notions of nobility,
aroused on the charnel-house-steps,
squatting where at villifying
the browning melieu dandling
the need for diapers.

perfectly hunch'd from picking
the stink from between his toes
breathing the air others have exhaled.

figless eve, her grin still visable
on the skin of the serpent's apple --
about civilization, the scrotal must
of the future lingers over the vineyard
and suckles.

Gregory William Farrell
71

Scheherazades

It was a great privilege to be there in the club chair on the third floor: only the affluent once had the time to read. And today was special because a good night's sleep that "knits up the ravel'd sleeve of care" allowed things to be seen more clearly -- recompense for nights when one heard souls crossing the River Styx.

Recompense too perhaps, for after waiting for needed rain, to have the sun come out and evaporate much of it for my garden. For taking time to get all the flies from between the windows in the dining room by putting a container over them, pushing a paper underneath and carrying them outside. Back and forth, back and forth. It seemed like I got them all and others appeared. How did they get between windows anyway? Had the sun woke them up? Big ones, little ones all flying away in the autumn air once I lifted the paper. I might've caught the wing of one -- but figured it'd be better than a death caught between windows even though it'd soon freeze. Kitty had come to investigate but after jumping on the windowsill, went back to washing her paws on a sunbeam on the floor.

Looking down at the book on my lap; perhaps it was the natural light of the windows, or the hard water that'd given my skin those ripples of a dried lake bed. But when had those blue veins, upraised bones, age spot craters begun?

Slim fingers were prized when I was growing up so I encased them in metal curlers while sleeping when not curling my hair, unaware that women in China used to bind their feet. When I took piano lessons, I hoped trying to reach far apart keys would encourage slimness.

Hand in marriage, right hand man, hand of God, in the palm of your hand, hand of fate. The shaking of

hands, hands on Bibles to give oaths, waving goodbye.

Ruling hand is a popular phrase. In post-Soviet Russia, memorials to victims of Stalin's purges are springing up while others just want to remember the good old days. It must be hard to come to terms with how many lost their lives though collectivization of agriculture, famine, intrigue, only to have communism collapse.

Our society, even after the Women's Movement, is still often "a man's world." One in which, if women try to make things better they're often accused of neglecting their families although stay at home mothers are becoming as rare as inkwells.

Women, even if still called the old ball and chain, could be like modern Scheherazades keeping things going when the rapid increase in the number of people having depression can be interpreted as a way of disengaging from hopelessness or how to change things. The novelist, Philip Roth, used the words *stupefies, sickens, infuriates*.

We live in literal postmodern consumer times, but transcendence is imprecise, the mythic just below the surface. Women have a natural feel for permanence because of our closer affinity to nature perhaps from cycles following the phases of the moon, the cycles of the earth. And yet we don't communicate this longer view of things as voters or if we are one of the few politicians. Which is odd, because women are supposed to be good at languages: Scheherazade came up with 1,001 stories. Why do women too often use language to keep other women in their place? Coarse was a popular term used by Victorian women for women not following expected roles.

I have a college roommate correspondent. Our interests have changed so sometimes we only e-mail about the weather but even that helps relate her stage in life to what mine must be and yet the longer I know

her, the less I do.

When I last saw her, we did talk about character education in our schools: how it can be taught without violating the separation of the church and state and we concluded that students cannot but help float when virtues like work, self-reliance, thrift, cleanliness, godliness, honesty and others were once highly regarded even if violated in private. What can they think when magazines rate candidates for political office by sexiness, aliens backing them? A woman's magazine had intricately carved Halloween pumpkins and underneath: *101 Ways to Make Your Life Simpler*; another had a thin model and underneath: *Food to Make You Happy*.

Still, hasn't about every era thought itself off kilter? In 1933, the essayist, Albert Jay Nock, wrote: "Some think we are plunging into the chaos of the Dark Ages..." It is almost impossible to gauge one's own culture -- maybe we are in those Dark Ages for all I know. Oddly enough, I heard the term in regard to our unipolar world: "the United States, through a series of events, and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, is the top dog. And if we collapse, there goes order," the commentator said. The barbarians were waiting at the gates. Mention was made of our eleven trillion dollar economy; that the eighty-seven billion request for the reconstruction in Iraq wasn't much at all -- and probably wasn't the last estimate since it is unknown how long we'd be there.

Last night I watched a program about the Colosseum. You can still see the four levels: the upper was for standing women, the poor, and slaves; tickets were numbered pottery shards. Five thousand animals were killed in dawn to dusk performances in a day: whole species of animals were lost in the slaughter; it wasn't until 404 A.D. that gladiatorial combat stopped

and Rome fell to barbarians not long afterwards. Eighty thousand people at one time watched tens of thousands of people die and to make sure they weren't faking death, branding irons were applied. Considered large even by today's stadiums, it had elevators, a retractable awning -- a symbol in the nineteenth century for Romanticism.

The Catholic Church, known as the Roman Catholic Church, and is scrambling now to survive in the aftermath of sexual abuse cases. But there is much to be said for the stability it gave, the leadership, the glue that, like Roman Empire itself, held disparate people together even though women have subordinate positions. How many Romans sensed that their way of life was declining and what they thought original was just karaoke?

The Shadows of the Dancer

Sometimes the eyes long for shadows --
those moments between motion and pose
when what is left of light shivers and dapples
into images deeper than mirrors, silk and
silvery things swaying just out of reach.
Even the frailest of lights will reveal them.

The dancer has companions he does not see,
comrades waltzing against the light, partners
following his every move, cohorts who know
as much about the dancer as the dance.
These airy things are like the spaces between
words. They become the watery glue

that binds tap to ballet, pirouette to do-si-do,
promenade to gyration, leap to elegant turn.
The lords and ladies of the dance genuflect
to the unexplained, name the soft silhouettes
which attend their every move, choreograph
among them like a wind bearing small lights.

The Waiting Day

A single song has paced through the house
all day. I've faced the tyranny of administrators,
spent time with interior prayer where silence
is praise and no moment too small to name you.

I was once a man who planted trees, the boy
in the wind caught dueling with his dreams
the day the sky fell. Today I listen as morning

pleads its case, shave a few bristles from my chin,
ponder why the dogs have started barking
and wonder if my morning shower will baptize
something long forgotten and lost in me.

I know my wounds only too well, long to stretch
back into the days that raged. Instead, I will
clean up the kitchen, put the dogs out for a run
and load the washer with another dirty load.

Later I will celebrate the soul's patient trust
with the skull, the strange fear I have for he who
waits in the mirror, the two smooth stones
I always keep in my pocket and Intel the sacred.

Who would believe the magic Alexander Graham
Bell was to begin or the way the seventh part
of the planet inherits its own innocence? The day
waits. Play the right tune and I could be dancing.

A Flower From a Sea of Faces

*For Justin, my little artist-brother, who should
never say his work is crap because it is beautiful.*

My little brother --
who claims to have
not a whit of drawing talent --
has a penciled
picture placed
in a spot of honor
on the entryway table.

It is a face, in tortured bliss,
flower sprouting from its
noble forehead. Eyes closed in
contemplation, turned slightly to one side
like a babe gazing longingly
through the bars of its cage.

It is drowning in a sea of
graphite, smudged together
to make it look
like roiling fog.
(How provocative
this face of peace and misery)

He almost burned it.
(Smudged fingerprints on the mat,
where fingers had
lovingly taped down the print)

It is late when he sits
at the computer, keyboard shoved aside
drawing-pencils scattered on the desk.
Dave Matthews crooning through the speakers.
The new picture blossoms.
He reaches for a different pencil,
with a thicker lead perhaps,
finding it easily in the jumble of grey wood
around him. (How happy he looks
there lost in an ocean of graphite paper imagination
foot tapping along to Dave.)

I slip away, unnoticed, leaving him
to pick his flower from a sea of faces.

To Be a Downtown Girl

Transmission fumes and stale liquor thicken the air.
A plastic geisha watches out of a dime store window.
He he he hoo.
breathe like a woman in labor.

Every time
she sells herself
it gets easier.
The smell of bodies and sex
on polyester motel comforters
has become as comforting as
the cigarette that extinguishes
when the time is up.

Crescent shaped tongues click meaningless garbage
about government deficiencies.
Faces, blank faces, wilting pavement blossoms,
pawn skin for a newspaper and a pack of menthols.

(untitled)

All of small town Ohio looks the same,
houses with big empty porches huddle
together while cars rust under naked trees
caught in gray weather somewhere between
Fall and Winter.

All surrounded by cows and cornfields.

Have you ever wandered into a cornfield at midnight?

The spirit of the corn is an old hag and
if she catches you in her corn
you will suck the lemon juice and vinegar
out of her bronze tits.

My Grad Night Dress

So fragile-purple, so strappy,
clearance bin-dug, that napkin of lace,
held by heroic spaghetti, a throwaway!

In my doorway, I pinned a corsage to it.
They did not take my photo.
They did not care it was my last day.
They did not say they were proud of me.
They weren't.

A friend, nothing more, wearing a tux, drove me
to his front porch, shadowed already by vines.

He ran out to kiss my unchokered throat,
my arm pits' baby powder mouth.
The friend waved good-bye for the party

Where they had known for months I wouldn't go.
They threatened eviction, then about-faced when they
realized that I, spat out by them,
he would take in reverently like oxygen,
the first breath of a June breeze, wisteria-laden,
and would incant with each breath he was proud of me.

They paroled me this one evening,
did not care it was my last day.
They did not take my photo, say they were proud of me.
He fed me under the vines, each bite a congratulation,
his sheet and his pillowcase my cap and my gown.
The tassel moved, oh how it moved,
from draping side to the other,
and the commencement speaker whispered,
"You will rule with what you have learned here."

My dress, clearance bin-dug, that napkin of lace,
so purple-fragile, so strappy, got tossed in the air
like a mortar board, the cork popped,
the orchids of the corsage
pollinated by the honey bee. I was dug out of the bin,
a throwaway held up by heroic spaghetti,
knowing that I had passed, that I would conquer.

The NEXUS staff would like to spend this page on encouraging artwork and fiction submissions.

Notice the size of the artwork section and the absence of the fiction section!? Fix it!

drawings, photos, paintings, sculptures (photos of), lithographs, charcoal, ink, graphite, stencils, screen printing, doodles, pastels, spirograms, cartoons, and what have you.

flash fiction, short stories, long stories, compact stories, wide stories, English papers (not really), good stories.

If we can print it then you should submit it. Art is expression and there is no use talking to a wall. Take chances with your work and grow as an artist, or forever suffer at the hands of your own self-doubt!

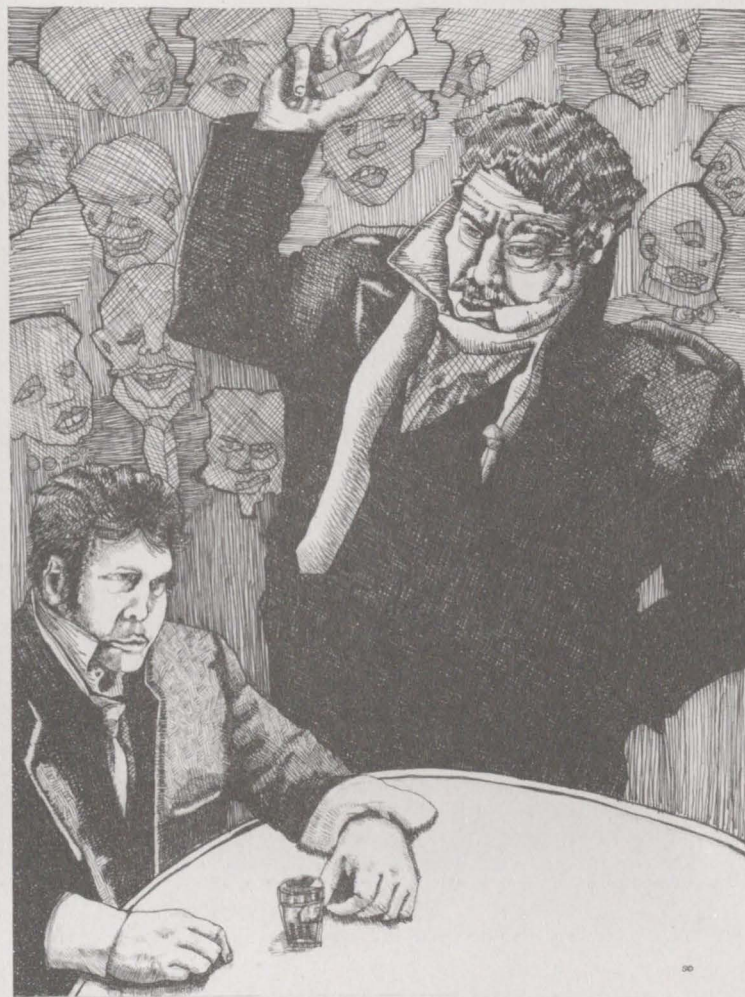
ARTWORK

Cowboy Band



Stephanie Rodriguez
86

Poor Raskolnikov



Stephanie Rodriguez
87

Cactus



Robert Rea
88

Bear Grass



Robert Rea
89

(untitled)



Roi J. Tamkin
90

(untitled)



Roi J. Tamkin
91

Introducing the
NEXUS staff section...

Passing judgement is much easier than
being judged, and so we, the NEXUS staff,
also submit for your judgement.

staff

Sweet Shit

The spinners on his gold hub caps are \$10 grand and I'm not sure why, they roll and rotate and make some shout sweet shit at them as painted lady skanks revealing thongs hover around the white cadillac attached to them.

I smoke backwood, a cigar black brown and rolled like a twig in connecticut leaf and I sit out front of work on the strip mall's edge, the sun blinding yellow on dead gravel skin the backwood tasting like shit but a bit sweeter.

My friends ex-husband, this chunky internal foul with chin and neck fat like a pelican, gave her as a mother's day gift silver dollars, they clanged hard against the counter at work and made my dad mutter sweet shit when I brought them home in a sandwich bag.

I plan to die when I'm 30 alone in a cincinnati loft, or maybe a chicago one, greek scotch bottles around me and opiumn smoke lofting when they bury me in green and yellow grass my sister will get a hold of my writing and my ex-lovers will write books because I'm an egomaniac.

After I'm in the ground a kid in a coffee shop 25 years from now will quote me and make a stick thin art girl swoon, all part of his plan to fuck her as I rot and he'll convince her how my inconsistent lines and raw language is such sweet shit.

BIO

Phil Estes is web editor for Nexus. He is an English Creative Writing major. If this were the magical land of OZ, and a house dropped on Phil, no one would take his shoes. This has embittered his work. Phil also battles daily with his desire to have an accent.

Pre-Symptomatic

You've been waiting for a reason:
I suppose the labor pains weren't enough
Or too much.
When I would disappear for hours
Groping for kind faces.
Carrying a stuffed Bambi and blanket.
That was when I stopped looking into your eyes.
You measured the weight of my words.
My movements a measure of your
Psychosis.
Ignorance was what you wanted:
A fault line and tremors
Because you could not stop shaking.
I blurred in your vision.

And here we are, facing one another.
I am looking at you now.
Blocking the cigarettes with my body
I raise my arm to ward the blow.
Though you can't really touch me.
Your eyes widen as you raise your hand higher.
An open palm with fingers touching.
"Give me my cigarettes."
You fall on me.
I block your thin arm.
Trying not to bruise you.
We shiver as I hold on.
Our bodies, at least, in agreement.

You walk heavily downstairs.
I back up against the cabinet.
Consider lighting up its contents.
My legs quake.
As I slide down.
Legs touch chest;
Forehead to knees.
The crying comes easily.

Rachel Peterson
96

My knees pop like yours.
I will hear you creaking
Any moment.
And you'll see.
Maybe I should let you smoke.

BIO:
An English/Religion major, Rachel spends her
spare time looking up words like "gewgaw" in
the dictionary instead of graduating...

And trying to change the world...

Unsuccessfully...

Until she gets her Quaker robots...

On ebay...

Oh, yes.

Rachel Peterson
97

Original Message

From: suel85

Date: Dec 5, 2004 11:38 AM

haha i was just meaning i dont know whats going on tomorrow night. What time do u guys usually hang out there? I dont get outta work til like 11 or later

Original Message

From: JerumTen

Date: Dec 5, 2004 10:22 AM

it's so vague I don't understand! it could mean so much! I don't want that writing on the wall, no sir.

confusion is the natural state. every realization we make opens a door into a new room so in the end we are left with more space to know.
motivation is what's hard and things do get out of hand quite often, but two birds in the bush have more potential then one in the belly.

I am seeking confusion. I found it pretty easily. I also enjoy the seat of my pants.

:-D

Original Message

From: suel85

Date: Dec 5, 2004 10:00 AM

I dunno whats going on in my life... lol
i take it by the seat of my pants ha

Jim Tarjeft

98

Lawn Work, Silent Gestures, Alignment.

Silent men cover their eyes with experience. the gloss is plain to see with conversation. where absent sighs return excuses. It's an old man circling his yard intent on movement. tyrannically molding autumns grass in an attempt to clear the leaves with his riding mower.

This moment is contentment.

Before

I wasn't myself. I was a part of we, seperate but still racing in the same direction: we were a pack of wolves. skirmished.

The branches are lower now. we are lone. I only feel you present beside me when I dream and it makes me cry to look behind. I said it. now. I suffer from nostalgia.

time is a train wrecking memories. time is sand.

Bio:

Jim is an egomaniac;
let him keep it to himself.

Jim Tarjeft

99

For Future Reference

I am politely ignoring the demonstration
of the seatbelt and oxygen mask;

my fear of flying temporarily dissolved
in a last-minute drink and the anxiety of seeing you.

knowing that not even the flotation device
beneath my seat can save me now.

I fixate on the raging palpitations within my chest:
a symptom of both a first date and a fiery crash.

I want to capture these butterflies in a jar
to ponder and study for future reference.

as a reminder of *real* fear, knowing I will leave them
to disappear at some unknown hour in the night.

I should write this down despite my sweaty palms
for even tomorrow, waking beside you.

we will have changed, if ever so slightly,
for better or worse, by the knowing of each other.

But soon I am airborne and all the languid minutes
add to this one rushing hour high above summer fields.

and looking down at the tiny houses and ribbon roads
I imagine the wires that have carried our promises

and think again if I could just write them down
I could possibly hold us to them.

Michael White
100

A Weekend on the Williams' Farm

So much depends upon the weather.
After three days of poetry and rain
this morning offers a brief respite.

I set out hiking only to find myself
ankle deep in mud, later covered,
through slips and spills in the mud.

Bloated clouds resume the downpour
and I am soon glazed with rainwater.
In the distance I see a speck of red

and I know its that damned wheelbarrow
useless and sinking in the mud.
Trudging past, I kick the white chickens.

Michael is an English grad student who left
the cubicle of corporate America for the
fame, glamour, and fortune of being a poet.

Michael White
101

Contributors Bios

Anne Babson recently got back from a residency at Yaddo, where she finished a new poetry collection and wrote a libretto for an opera that will be performed by The Meridian Arts Ensemble. She has several publishing credits, including four chapbooks.

Barry Ballard is from Burleson, Texas.

Jessica Baughman is a student here at Wright State.

Drew Bauguess is a student here at Wright State.

Maria Belmonte is a Licensed Funeral Director and Embalmer for the state of Ohio and currently works as a mortician for Wright State's Anatomical Gift Program.

Teresa Breeden is from Carson, Nevada.

Alanna Brennan did not provide a bio.

Gaylord Brewer is from Lascassas, Tennessee.

Reid Bush is both a Denny and Davoren Hanna award winner and has been accepted by over 80 magazines and journals in the U.S.

Emma Bwika is from Mombasa, Kenya.

Sarah Coates is an English major at Wright State. She plans on traveling to Scotland soon to study at the University of Sterling.

Noel Conneely is from Dublin, Ireland.

Darrell Epp hails from Hamilton, Ontario Canada where he has self-published several pieces of work and has had three plays performed on stage.

Timons Esaias is from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Gregory William Farrell's poetry has "seduce(d), to a degree, the demons, and the ghosts which have riddled my life, and much less destructive than the other palliatives I employ." Farrell has been previously published in the *Cold Mountain Review*. He currently resides in Connecticut.

Valerie Felmet is a Senior Nursing (Pre-med) student here at Wright State University.

Nathan Goff is a returning student in English at Wright State, writes and plays guitar for the local hard rock band Entrenched, and has published several poems and songs.

Philip J. Hickman is from Columbus, Ohio.

Ward Kelley is a three time Pushcart Prize nominee whose publication credits include *Another Chicago Magazine*, *GSU Review*, *Pif*, and *Zuzu's Petals*.

B. Z. Niditch is from Brookline, Massachusetts.

William Dauenhauer is from Willowick, Ohio.

Kyle Nuske is a graduate student here at Wright State University. He has taken on an active role with the Nexus poetry group, and is a diehard Cleveland Browns fan.

Nicole Provencher is from San Antonio, Texas and has several publishing credits.

Tina Puckett has served as editor of *Canto*, Kent State University Stark's literary magazine and has been published in several university and small press publications.

Robert Rea is a computer science professor here at Wright State University. His photographs have appeared in previous issues of *Nexus*.

Jeannine E. Sandlin is a fifth year senior double majoring in Music and English at Wright State. She is also an active executive board member in the Way Off Broadway Theatre Company on campus.

Karen Sisk is a senior English major at Wright State. She transferred after a long and painful stint at Miami University. She currently resides in Downtown Dayton.

Carol Smallwood is from Mt. Pleasant Michigan and has published books and other works.

Beverly Smart will graduate from Wright State this March. Her photography is also featured on the cover. She'd like to come back as a flamingo in another life.

Spex is a student at Wright State. He is involved with WWSU, the campus radio station, and has a sweet Gordie Howe jersey.

Stephanie Rodriguez is a freelance illustrator and graphic designer, residing in Miami, FL. She has a BFA in illustration from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. Email: Marquis1023@aol.com

Roi J. Tamkin did not provide a bio.

David Trame sent us his work from Venice, Italy.

Ryan G. Van Cleave's most recent books include a poetry collection, *The Magical Breasts of Britney Spears* (Pavement Saw, 2004), and a creative writing textbook, *Contemporary American Poetry: Behind the Scenes* (Allyn & Bacon/Longman, 2003). He lives in upstate South Carolina.

Sean Wheeler is an English major at Wright State.

Allison Whittenberg is from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Fredrick Zydek has over 800 publishing credits including *The Antioch Review*, *Cimmaron Review*, *The Hollins Critic*, *Nimrod*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Poetry Northwest*.

